

111TH CONGRESS  
1ST SESSION

# H. R. 1240

To improve and expand geographic literacy among kindergarten through grade 12 students in the United States by improving professional development programs for kindergarten through grade 12 teachers offered through institutions of higher education.

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## IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

FEBRUARY 26, 2009

Mr. VAN HOLLEN (for himself, Mr. BLUNT, Mr. WALZ, and Mr. EHLERS) introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Education and Labor

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## A BILL

To improve and expand geographic literacy among kindergarten through grade 12 students in the United States by improving professional development programs for kindergarten through grade 12 teachers offered through institutions of higher education.

1       *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*  
2       *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3       **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4       This Act may be cited as the “Teaching Geography  
5       is Fundamental Act”.

1 **SEC. 2. GEOGRAPHY EDUCATION.**

2 Title II of the Higher Education Act of 1965 (20  
3 U.S.C. 1021 et seq.) is amended by adding at the end  
4 the following:

5 **“PART D—GEOGRAPHY EDUCATION**

6 **“SEC. 271. FINDINGS.**

7 “Congress makes the following findings:

8 “(1) Geographic literacy is essential to a well-  
9 prepared citizenry in the 21st Century because geo-  
10 graphic factors assume greater importance as the  
11 world’s economies, societies, and political structures  
12 grow more global in scale.

13 “(2) In a recent National Geographic–Roper 9-  
14 country survey of geographic literacy among young  
15 adults aged 18 through 24, Americans ranked sec-  
16 ond to last. Only 13 percent of young adults ages 18  
17 through 24 in the United States were able to cor-  
18 rectly identify Iraq on a map of Asia and the Middle  
19 East.

20 “(3) The economic stature and competitiveness  
21 of the United States requires increasingly sophisti-  
22 cated levels of geographic knowledge and mastery of  
23 geographic tools.

24 “(4) United States Department of Labor data  
25 identifies geotechnology as one of the 3 fastest grow-  
26 ing employment fields serving industries such as in-

1       surance, banking, real estate, forestry, and agri-  
2       culture as well as Federal, State, and local Govern-  
3       ments.

4               “(5) The National Academy of Sciences urged  
5       creation of a national program to improve the geo-  
6       graphic competence of the United States general  
7       population and the school age population.

8               “(6) Geography is defined as a ‘core academic  
9       subject’ within the No Child Left Behind Act of  
10       2001.

11              “(7) A recent National Geographic Society sur-  
12       vey found that all 50 States and the District of Co-  
13       lumbia recognize geography in their curricula or con-  
14       tent standards, and an increasing number require  
15       geography for graduation and include geography in  
16       mandated statewide assessments.

17              “(8) Seven of 10 educators responding to a Na-  
18       tional Geographic survey felt their professional de-  
19       velopment opportunities in geography were inad-  
20       equate and half believed their schools had inad-  
21       equate basic materials for teaching geography.

22              “(9) The National Geographic Society has  
23       spent over 15 years pioneering an extraordinarily ef-  
24       fective national program for improving the teaching  
25       of geography by engaging university faculty

1 geographers and highly trained teachers in State Ge-  
2 ographic Alliances dedicated to providing high qual-  
3 ity professional development opportunities for kin-  
4 dergarten through grade 12 teachers.

5 “(10) More than 60 colleges and universities in  
6 all 50 States have received grants from the National  
7 Geographic Society to support State Geographic Alli-  
8 ances and their professional development programs.  
9 Alliance-trained kindergarten through grade 12  
10 teachers and their higher education partners conduct  
11 workshops, develop localized teaching materials, and  
12 facilitate communication among thousands of teach-  
13 ers whose responsibilities include teaching of geog-  
14 raphy in various formats and grade levels.

15 “(11) A study by Mid-Continent Research for  
16 Education and Learning that assessed student aca-  
17 demic achievement in geography on the National As-  
18 sessment of Educational Progress showed that stu-  
19 dents taught by Alliance-trained teachers out-  
20 performed other students by almost 10 percent.

21 **“SEC. 272. PURPOSES AND OBJECTIVES.**

22 “(a) PURPOSE.—The purpose of this part is to pro-  
23 mote geographic literacy and improved understanding of  
24 global cultures among kindergarten through grade 12 stu-  
25 dents by expanding programs that employ the geographic

1 knowledge and expertise of faculty members in institutions  
2 of higher education for the benefit of kindergarten  
3 through grade 12 teachers and to otherwise advance geo-  
4 graphic literacy.

5 “(b) OBJECTIVES.—The objectives of this part are  
6 the following:

7 “(1) To increase students knowledge of, and  
8 achievement in, standards-based geography to enable  
9 the students to become better informed and more  
10 productive citizens.

11 “(2) To increase the number of highly qualified  
12 teachers of United States and world geography and  
13 to enable the teachers to improve student mastery of  
14 geographic principles and practical applications of  
15 those principles.

16 “(3) To encourage geographic education re-  
17 search, to develop and disseminate effective instruc-  
18 tional materials, and to promote replication of best  
19 practices and exemplary programs that foster geo-  
20 graphic literacy.

21 “(4) To assist States in measuring the impact  
22 of education in geography.

23 “(5) To leverage and expand private and public  
24 support for geography education partnerships at na-  
25 tional, State, and local levels.

1 **“SEC. 273. GRANT PROGRAM AUTHORIZED.**

2 “The Secretary is authorized to award a grant to a  
3 national nonprofit educational organization or a consor-  
4 tium of organizations (hereafter in this part referred to  
5 as the ‘grantee’) that has as its primary purpose the im-  
6 provement of the quality of student understanding of ge-  
7 ography through effective teaching of geography in the  
8 Nation’s classrooms.

9 **“SEC. 274. USE OF FUNDS.**

10 “(a) DIRECT ACTIVITIES.—The grantee shall use not  
11 more than 25 percent of the funds made available through  
12 the grant for a fiscal year—

13 “(1) to strengthen and expand the grantee’s re-  
14 lationships with institutions of higher education and  
15 with State and local educational agencies and other  
16 public and private organizations with a commitment  
17 to geography education and the benefits of geog-  
18 raphy education;

19 “(2) to support and promote research-based  
20 training of teachers of geography and related dis-  
21 ciplines in kindergarten through grade 12 as a  
22 means of broadening student knowledge of the  
23 world, including the dissemination of information on  
24 effective practices and research findings concerning  
25 the teaching of geography;

1           “(3) to support research on effective geography  
2           teaching practices and the development of assess-  
3           ment instruments and strategies to document stu-  
4           dent understanding of geography;

5           “(4) to convene national conferences on geog-  
6           raphy education to assess the current state of geo-  
7           graphic literacy and to identify strategies for im-  
8           provement; and

9           “(5) to develop and disseminate appropriate re-  
10          search-based materials to foster geographic literacy.

11         “(b) SUBGRANTS.—

12                 “(1) IN GENERAL.—The grantee shall use not  
13                 more than 75 percent of the funds made available  
14                 through the grant for a fiscal year to award sub-  
15                 grants to eligible recipients.

16                 “(2) ELIGIBLE RECIPIENT DEFINED.—In this  
17                 part the term ‘eligible recipient’ means an institution  
18                 of higher education associated with—

19                         “(A) a State geographic alliance;

20                         “(B) a nonprofit educational organization;

21                         “(C) a State educational agency or local  
22                         educational agency; or

23                         “(D) a partnership between or among an  
24                         alliance, organization, or agency described in  
25                         subparagraph (A), (B) or (C).

1           “(3) SUBGRANT USES OF FUNDS.—Eligible re-  
2           cipients shall use the subgrant funds for 1 or more  
3           of the following purposes:

4                   “(A) Conducting teacher training pro-  
5                   grams that use effective and research-based ap-  
6                   proaches to the teaching of geography at the  
7                   kindergarten through grade 12 level.

8                   “(B) Applying Geographic Information  
9                   System (GIS) or other geographic technological  
10                  tools to the teaching of geography.

11                  “(C) Applying Internet and other distance  
12                  learning technology to the teaching of geog-  
13                  raphy or to the continuing education of teach-  
14                  ers.

15                  “(D) Promoting rigorous academic stand-  
16                  ards and assessment techniques to guide and  
17                  measure student performance in geography.

18                  “(E) Promoting research in geography  
19                  education, emphasizing research that leads to  
20                  improving student achievement.

21                  “(F) Carrying out local, field-based activi-  
22                  ties for teachers and students to improve their  
23                  knowledge of the concepts and tools of geog-  
24                  raphy while enhancing understanding of their  
25                  home region.



1           “(G) Promoting comparative studies of  
2 world cultures, economies, and environments.

3           “(H) Encouraging replication of best prac-  
4 tices and model programs to promote geo-  
5 graphic literacy.

6           “(I) Developing and disseminating effec-  
7 tive, research-based geography learning mate-  
8 rials.

9           “(J) Convening State-based conferences to  
10 assess the state of geographic literacy and to  
11 identify strategies for improvement.

12 **“SEC. 275. APPLICATIONS.**

13       “(a) GRANTEE APPLICATIONS.—To be eligible to re-  
14 ceive a grant under this part, the grantee shall submit  
15 to the Secretary an application at such time, in such man-  
16 ner, and accompanied by such information as the Sec-  
17 retary may require.

18       “(b) ELIGIBLE RECIPIENT APPLICATIONS.—

19           “(1) SUBMISSION.—To be eligible to receive a  
20 subgrant under this part, an eligible recipient shall  
21 submit an application to the grantee at such time,  
22 in such manner and accompanied by such informa-  
23 tion as the grantee may require.

24           “(2) REVIEW.—

1           “(A) IN GENERAL.—The grantee shall in-  
2           vite individuals described in subparagraph (B)  
3           to review all applications from eligible recipients  
4           for a subgrant under this section and to make  
5           recommendations to the grantee regarding the  
6           approval of the applications.

7           “(B) REVIEWERS.—The individuals re-  
8           ferred to in subparagraph (A) are the following:

9                   “(i) Leaders in the field of geography  
10                  education.

11                  “(ii) Such other individuals as the  
12                  grantee may determine are necessary or  
13                  desirable.

14   **“SEC. 276. REQUIREMENTS.**

15           “(a) ADMINISTRATIVE COSTS.—The grantee receiv-  
16           ing a grant under this part for a fiscal year, and each  
17           eligible recipient receiving a subgrant under this part for  
18           a fiscal year, may use not more than 15 percent of the  
19           funds made available through the grant or subgrant, re-  
20           spectively, for administrative costs.

21           “(b) MATCHING REQUIREMENTS.—

22                  “(1) IN GENERAL.—In order to be eligible to  
23                  receive a subgrant under this part an eligible recipi-  
24                  ent shall agree in the application submitted under  
25                  section 275(b) to provide matching funds towards

1 the costs of the activities assisted under the  
2 subgrant.

3 “(2) AMOUNT.—An eligible recipient shall pro-  
4 vide matching funds in an amount equal to 20 per-  
5 cent of the subgrant funds received under this part  
6 for the second and each succeeding fiscal year for  
7 which subgrant payments are made.

8 “(3) SOURCE OF MATCHING FUNDS.—Matching  
9 funds may be provided in cash or in kind, fairly  
10 evaluated, including facilities, staffing salaries, and  
11 educational materials.

12 **“SEC. 277. AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.**

13 “There are authorized to be appropriated to carry out  
14 this part \$15,000,000 for fiscal year 2010 and each of  
15 the 5 succeeding fiscal years.”.

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